

Claims

1. A method for defining the format of a form by a computer, the form having a plurality of layout items, the layout items defining the presentation of data of a business application, the method comprising the following steps:
providing a logic view with nodes to represent the layout items, the logic view
 - (a) to visualize structure information of the form,
 - (b) to visualize a processing order of the layout items by the position of the nodes,
 - (c) to visualize at least one of the nodes as a selected node to represent a selected layout item;providing a property view to display properties of the selected layout item;
providing a layout view to display the layout items, wherein the selected layout item is highlighted;
modifying the selected layout item and the processing order through interaction with a user; and
creating a form definition document.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein in step providing logic view, the logic view is provided as a tree view and the nodes are tree nodes so that the processing order is visualized by a root node, a plurality of branch nodes, and a plurality of leave nodes.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein in step providing logic view, the plurality of branch nodes comprise condition nodes to process layout items depending on logical statements in the nodes.

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4. The method of claim 2, wherein modifying the processing order through interaction comprises to change the position of the tree nodes.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the steps providing logic view, providing property view and providing layout view are performed for a graphical user interface on a single screen.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein step modifying comprises to verify the compatibility of layout items and processing order with a predefined data interface of the business application.
7. The method of claim 1, further comprising to generate a form printing program from the form definition document, the form printing program being called by the business application to print a final document.
8. A computer for defining the format of a form, the form having a plurality of layout items, the layout items defining the presentation of data of a business application, the computer comprising:
 - a display for providing a tree view with tree nodes to represent the layout items, the tree view (a) to visualize structure information of the form, (b) to visualize a processing order of the layout items by the position of the tree nodes, (c) to visualize at least one of the tree nodes as a selected node to represent a selected layout item; for providing a property view to display properties of the selected layout item, the properties with logical statements for

conditionally processing the items; for providing a layout view to display the layout items, wherein the selected layout item is highlighted; interaction means for modifying the selected layout item and the processing order through interaction with a user who changes the position of the tree nodes; and storing means for creating a form definition document.

9. The computer of claim 8, further comprising verification means to verify the compatibility of layout items and processing order with a predefined data interface of the business application.
10. A computer program product having computer program code instructions for defining the format of a form, the form having layout items to define data presentation of a business application, the computer program instructions causing a processor to execute the following steps:
 - providing a logic view with nodes to represent the layout items, the logic view
 - (a) to visualize structure information of the form,
 - (b) to visualize a processing order of the layout items by the position of the nodes,
 - (c) to visualize at least one of the nodes as a selected node to represent a selected layout item;
 - providing a property view to display properties of the selected layout item;

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providing a layout view to display the layout items,
wherein the selected layout item is highlighted;
modifying the selected layout item and the processing
order through interaction with a user; and
creating a form definition document.

11. The computer program product of claim 10, wherein the computer program code instructions cause the processor to execute the step providing logic view such that the logic view is provided as a tree view that visualizes the processing order by a root node, a plurality of branch nodes, and a plurality of leave nodes.
12. The computer program product of claim 10, wherein the computer program code instructions cause the processor to execute the step providing logic view such that the plurality of branch nodes comprise condition nodes to process layout items depending on logical statements in the nodes.
13. The computer program product of claim 10, wherein the computer program code instructions cause the processor to execute the step modifying the processing order through user interaction to change the position of tree nodes.
14. The computer program product of claim 10, wherein the computer program code instructions causes the processor to execute the steps providing logic view, providing property view and providing layout view are performed for a graphical user interface on a single screen.

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15. The computer program product of claim 10, wherein the computer program code instructions cause the processor to execute the step modifying such to verify the compatibility of layout items and processing order with a predefined data interface of the business application.

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